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PATRIOTIC

SKETCHES

OF

IRELAND.

PATRIOTIC

SKETCHES

OF

IRELAND,

WRITTEN IN CONNAUGHT.

BY MISS OWENSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PATRIOTIC

SKETCHES,

&c.

SKETCH XII.

ALTHOUGH the sun was hastening to his goal, pursued by gloomy masses of dark red clouds, that seemed "portentous of a storm," we were tempted a few evenings back to take a short ramble, which amply repaid us for the risk we voluntarily encountered.

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The threatened inclemency, however, passed away in a few heavy drops: the air was soft and oppressive, and its tranquillity was only disturbed at distant intervals by sudden gusts of wind, which increased the dashing of the waves against the bar.

The mountains on the other side of the bay were veiled in deep blue mists, while the summits of those we approached were brightened by the slanting sun-beam, which shot its sacred light from the watery clouds on which it seemed to repose. As we proceeded through a deep-en-

tangled dell, I was struck by the forcible contrast presented to my eye, by two cabins, which lay close to each other; the one wretched and ruinous, was raised with mud, and thatched with sods; the other well built, and almost picturesque in its appearance, displayed all the neat comforts of an English cottage. Mr. * * * * offered to account for the disparity; but observing a decent-looking old man seated at the door of the better residence, he added, "Here is one (an old tenant and workman of my father's), whose information on the subject will be more

grateful to you than mine can possibly be." The old man now approached us, and with that courtesy which invariably distinguishes the manners of the peasantry of this country, he requested us to walk in and rest ourselves, adding, the cow had just been milked, if we would condescend to take a draught of new milk.

We found within the cabin his old dame seated at her wheel, and a young girl busied at some flax. She was pretty, and on inquiry I found she was not their daughter, but a

little orphan they had adopted.—"Poor thing (said the old man, looking affectionately at her), she has got a disorder in her arm, which is wasting her away sadly." Mr. *** advised him to take her to an hospital in the neighbourhood. "God bless her," returned the old man, "I would take her all over the world, if it would do her any good;" and yet he had a family of his own, and the little orphan had no other claim on his kindness than that of standing in need of it.

I now inquired into the cause of

that evident disparity of circumtances which apparently existed between him and his neighbour, and was glad to hear that the ruinous cabin was uninhabited. "That miserable hut," said he, "was my own poor home for twelve years; for, never being able to get a lease from the gentleman who stood between me and the head landlord (his honour's father there, Christ bless him), my heart failed me, as to doing any thing in the way of improvement; knowing that if I did, my poor boys might be turned out, and a stranger come and reap the fruits of our la-

hour: so I went plodding on from year to year, heartless enough, taking an acre here to-day, and there to-morrow, to sow our potatoes and flax in. But no sooner had the lands got back into his honour's hands (my blessing light on him), than he gave us a lease that will stand good for my children and my children's children; and then our spirits got up, and we worked night and day, and improved this little farm, and built this comfortable cabin, which it is worth while to keep neat and clean; and though I never saw twenty guineas of my own together in all my life,

there is not a happier man in the barony for all that."

This little detail shed another ray of light upon those popular discontents which have so long agitated this country, and which have been invariably attributed to an inimicality on the part of the Irish peasant to the British government.

The copyhold lease is unknown in Ireland; and neither the equity nor the heart of the middle-man acknowledges those claims which the affection of the child makes on the little

spot dear to the earliest feelings of his soul, and reclaimed and cultivated by the hands of his father.

We now proceeded along a narrow and neglected path, partially shaded by a thicket, and which gradually wound up the brow of a rugged hill, whose summit was crowned with the ruins and cemetery of the abbey of Drumard. As the abbey had received a particular benediction from one of the popes, it is still looked on as a kind of passport to salvation (by the neighbouring peasantry), to be buried in its conse-

crated ground; and many a snowy garland, and flowery wreath, identified the "narrow house" of some recently lost, or tenderly lamented object. The gloom of evening was thickening; from the eminence where we stood, the sea, dark and turbulent, was heard to roar. I sat down on a tomb among the ruins of the abbey; and the tone of my mind, though mournful, was not ungracious to my fancy or my feelings. At that moment a young peasant entered the cemetery, and having chased away a mule who was grazing on its skirts, he took off his hat, and approaching

Mr. *** with a melancholy air, said, "that he had followed his honour, in the hope of relieving his heart of a great weight, for that it was nigh to break when he beheld the beasts of the field disturbing the remains of his poor father and mother, owing to the fences of the burial-ground being all removed or broken down, so that at last the whole church-yard would become pasture; and all this," added he, "for want, an please your honour, of mending that ruined wall which served as a parting between it and the parson's lands. For my own part, I would.

rather fast for a week, and give up my labour towards rebuilding the wall, than to see the remains of my poor parents disturbed by mules, and horses, and pigs; and if your honour will but allow me to take stones and sand from your honour's quarry, I will engage to build up the wall myself in three days, without either assistance or reward." This disinterested request was instantly complied with, and with blessings on his tongue, and satisfaction in his eyes, the young peasant departed; stooping to pluck away a thistle from the grave of his parents as he passed

it,* with a look full of self-satisfaction, and delighted to make a temporary resignation of the means of livelihood, by which he should secure the ashes of his departed parents from violation.

The affectionate regard which the Irish peasant feels for the memory of those dear to him in life, is indeed romantic, and almost incredible.—"Here," said Mr. * * * * (pointing

* I afterwards learnt that he had actually carried the stones on his back from a considerable distance, with which he had built up the walls of the cemetery.

to a tomb-stone); "here is a curious instance of the love of posthumous honours prevailing among the lower orders of this country. The person whose death, &c. &c. this grave-stone is to relate, superintended the carriage of it here to-day himself, and actually chose the spot where he wished to be interred. He was a poor farmer in delicate health; and probably purchased the means of perpetuating his memory after death, by the denial of many comforts requisite to the prolongation of his life."

This circumstance brought mu-

tually to our remembrance many anecdotes illustrative of the predominant passion of the lower Irish, to hold an endeared immortality in the hearts of their surviving friends. In the poems of Ossian many allusions are made to this no ignoble propensity; and the bard who anxiously exclaims, "Oh! lay me near my favourite hills, ye that see the light," &c. &c., seems to have been animated by the same desire as the peasant of the present day, who watches with anxiety the progress of his tomb, and marks the spot which is to receive his ashes.

Not many months back, a labouring man was tried in an assize town in this province, and condemned to die; but betraying a hardened insensibility to his fate (even while sentence was passing on him), the judge endeavoured to awaken some "compunctious visitings of conscience" in his unrepenting breast, by declaring that he should suffer in forty-eight hours. "Forty-eight hours!" reiterated the condemned with a smile of contempt; "in forty-eight minutes if you will, so that my body is but given to my people."

It is a circumstance well known

in the neighbourhood of Tereragh, that during the late rebellion a man was tried and condemned for disaffection, to whom it was offered to have his sentence of death changed into transportation, if he would make some discoveries. After some consultation, however, with his wife and family, he sent for the officer of the guard, and told him he was ready for execution. "We must all die, please your honour," said he calmly, "sooner or later; for my part, thank God! I am sure of dying in the midst of my people. Many a tear will be dropt, and many a song sung

over me, and my children's children will talk of my wake and my funeral. But if I go into foreign parts, though I save my life for a time, I must die at last; and die among strangers, without one friend to close my eyes, or to watch the morning light shining for the first time on my corpse." His wife, who was present, wept; but confirmed him in his resolution, and the next day he was executed.

A passion for enjoying a twofold existence, independant of actual being; of tracing back genealogical

honours, and anticipating a perpetuated life in the hearts of those they leave behind; is a passion incidental to the native Irish character of every rank; and though in the world's language it may be deemed a romantic passion, yet romance, like heroism, is never the national *trait* of a corrupt or base people: it may be found in the character of an Aristides; it may be traced in the conduct of a Scevola, but it will not be easily discovered in the slaves of modern Greece, or found in the natives of modern Rome.

The last rays of the setting sun

had withdrawn their glow from the ruins of Drumard, and were succeeded by a clear twilight, animated by the brightness of a rising moon. We were on the point of returning to L* * * house, which was little more than half a mile distant across a field-path, when a partial view of a *holy well* caught as we descended the brow of the hill, and tempted us to a little pilgrimage aside, for it lay almost in our way to L* * * house. We directed our steps therefore to a glen, through which a stream meandered its irregular way, over a rude bed of rock, which pro-

duced an incessant murmur in its impeded course. A little circular spot sacred to religious gloom, and shaded with sycamores and elms, terminated the glen: its entrance was constructed of a rude arch, and the flag which formed its threshold was thrown over the stream, which had doubtless been the Rubicon of faith to many an all-believing soul. In the centre of this consecrated spot stood a round stone bath, which received its tributary waters from the adjoining sacred spring; which was simply covered with a broad flat stone, raised over it longitudinally.

A path was traced round the holy well, which seemed to have been "worn by holy knees," and a small bowl suspended over it by a chain, many a holy lip had doubtless pressed, and haply fancied that it quaffed salvation with the draught. At some little distance from the bath and well stood a simple altar, enriched with stones, and shaded by a spreading oak, from whose trunk was hung a wooden crucifix, and on whose branches were thrown the votive offerings of those whose "faith had made them whole," while the names of the pious convalescents were carved on its bark.

Religion, in her deepest mood of solemn meditation, could not have chosen a spot more congenial to the indulgence of her spiritual abstraction. The gloomy sequestration of the place, the purposes to which it was devoted, the rude simplicity of its aspect, the sweet solemnity of the hour, the oppressive softness of the atmosphere, and the stilly sounds that breathed on the silence of the evening, gave a combined and touching interest to the scene; and if I were to judge by my own feelings, it required no predisposition to fanaticism, to resign (in such a spot and

in such an hour) the soul to the influence of sacred emotion, and by a "soft transition mingle with the skies."

Such a temple as this must ever be accordant to the simplicity of primitive religion, where heaven forms the canopy, and nature furnishes the altar; where all inspires enthusiasm, unaccompanied by the fury of sect, and all breathe the ardour of devotion, unalloyed by that venality to which devotion is so frequently a prey; when credulous vice hopes to "bribe the wrath of ill-requited hea-

ven," and pious Fraud affects to cancel the sin, and laughs while he profits by the folly of the sinner.

Superstition is the religion of weak minds; but the superstition which the simple, the romantic solemnity of this little spot awakened, was the orthodox of the fancy and the heart.

I left it with regret; and we again found ourselves in the gloomy little glen; the sea-breeze rushed sharply through it, and our approach to the shore was marked by the change of atmosphere, which was now sharp

and cold; and we were luxuriating in the idea of a warm drawing-room and good fire, when a shivering little girl appeared driving a sorry horse (laden with turf) in the narrow and almost impassable defile which we were struggling through; she did not appear above ten years old, and was literally half-naked.

With the idle curiosity incident to ramblers, we asked her some questions, which she answered in Irish; and we learnt that she was the eldest child of a poor widow, who lived on the other side of the hill we had de-

scended; she was the only one of four children able to work, "and was then," she said, "returning home after getting some turf off Lawrence Hogan's bog, Patrick Flanagan having lent his horse out of charity to draw it." "And Mr. Lawrence Hogan," said Mr. ***, "is liable to a penalty for giving turf in this manner off the bog; and Mr. Patrick Flanagan has been idle all day for the want of his horse; but one half of the poor of this country would perish were it not for the benevolence and brotherly assistance of the other." The little shivering girl

curtseyed, and passed on towards the mountain. How few are the hardships to which the females of this country are not inured from their infancy!

By the time we had reached the old avenue of L*** house, the moon rode high, and darted her beams through the foliage of the trees that canopied our heads, while opposed to her cold but brilliant light the deep red blaze of a turf fire gleamed through the "loop-hole" of a neighbouring cabin. The song which caught our ear as we passed the door,

induced us to enter. It was the song of an itinerant taylor; he was seated in the centre of the earthen floor, working by the light of a rush, and surrounded by a group of children, who were hanging delightedly on his song; and watching with eagerness the progress of the little frieze jackets, spun by their mother, and now in the hands of the musical taylor, while their parents, released from the labours of hire, were working by the light of the moon in their little garden; and their eldest brother, submitting to the influence of inordinate fatigue, lay stretched on some

straw in a corner of the cabin, the head of a calf actually reposing on his arm, and the parent cow quietly slumbering at his feet.—A more striking picture of the interior of an Irish cabin could not be given.

Notwithstanding a certain quaint humour in the wandering taylor (who entered with some degree of droll freedom into conversation with us), and the beauty of the children strikingly apparent even in their ragged attire, the clouds of smoke which thickened round us drove us almost immediately away.

SKETCH XIII.

THERE are not only picturesque forms, picturesque scenes, and picturesque sounds, on which the fancy loves to dwell; but even the weather has its picturesque beauty, and every season of the day "its charm peculiar:" which to a poetic imagination never loses a certain interest, and communicates to every object something of its own character. Thus while the genius of a Lorraine basked

in the red rich beams of a declining sun, the fancy of a Salvator wooed the gloomy shadows of the midnight storms. Thus the East's chill blasts, or South's soft breeze, the thunder's prelusive cloud, or day's meridian ray, communicates to the human frame a sensation correspondent to their effects; which reacting on the feelings and the mind, submits to the influence of material causes, the essence of the immaterial being.

" So the glad impulse of congenial powers,
Or of sweet sound, or fair-proportion'd form,
The grace of motion, or the *bloom* of *light*,
Thrills through Imagination's tender frame:

From nerve to nerve, all naked and alive,
They catch the spreading ray till now the soul
At length discloses every tuneful spring
To that harmonious movement from without
Responsive."

Human knowledge has its source in human wants; and he who first made meteorology his study, was perhaps like me dependant on the vicissitudes of the weather for his occupation and his pleasures.

A ramble among some fine mountain scenery having been proposed, we left L*** house early in the morning on our pedestrian tour; although

the apparently doubtful temper of the day almost held determination in suspense, while it possessed the same degree of fascination as the dotage of love is apt to discover in the half-pouting, half-smiling caprice of a whimsical mistress. The mellowed tone of spirits under which my last Sketch was drawn, when the soft gloom of an autumnal evening hung its pensive shadows round me, was now, by the sweetness of an autumnal morning, animated into that flow of animal and intellectual vivacity which flings on the opening scenes of nature a prismatic hue,

"And before us turns
The gayest, happiest attitude of things."

As we emerged from the venerable avenue, the elevation of the road into which we advanced gave to our glance a full view of the ocean; its bosom smooth and unruffled sparkled to the radiance of an almost vertical sun; while the bar resisting the tide's swelling ebb, flung back the stealing wave in snowy breakers. High above our winding path the Ox-mountains arose like an amphitheatre, and spreading their undulating line towards the county of Leitrim, lost their distant summits in the golden

clouds that reposed on them, while on the opposite shore the solitary majesty of Knock-na-ree settled its lofty brow.

As we paused to contemplate a scene rich in some of the finest features of the picturesque sublime, a young peasant approached us: he seemed like the hereditary bards of his country, "formed in the prodigality of nature;" and though "he whistled as he went," if the intelligence of his countenance was to be credited, it was not "for want of thought." This," said Mr. ***, who

accompanied us, "is an *à propos* rencontre; for this is the young fellow I mentioned to you, who has obtained so much celebrity among his rustic friends for singing the songs of Ossian;" and in fact, after a few words of conversation with him, we discovered he was on his way to attend a wake seven miles for that purpose. Mr. *** asked him if he would come and sing the songs of Ossian for us at L*** house; he replied, with a bow and a blush, that "he did not think he could, not being used to sing before such company;" adding, that "he was sure he could

not make himself understood in English, as the songs were in such fine old *cramp* Irish, that few (save the old people) could understand them; and that though he *felt* all he sung, he could not himself well explain it, so as to *hit his fancy*." In a word he gave us to understand, that the songs had descended orally in the pure ancient Irish, which, like every other polished language, had its classical and vulgar dialects.

At my particular instance, the young story-teller (for so he was named) repeated some stanzas from

Ossian in a species of recitative not unmusical: it was an account of Fingal's combat with the Danish monarch; and while he recited the combat with some degree of epic fire, he pointed to a mountain sacred to some of the feats of his hero, and thus gave a superadded interest to his "song of other times."

It is now I believe generally allowed by those whose attention has been fascinated by the subject, that the Ossianic poems are not more ancient than the eleventh and twelfth centuries; as many of the terms of lan-

guage found in them must have been unknown to the early Irish: they are even now given in an almost obsolete dialect, though still in that short measure which was formerly sung to the harp by the Irish lyrists.

The pertinacity with which the Irish adhere to their ancient customs and manners, in almost every instance, is strongly illustrated in this: our young story-teller being in fact a representative of a certain order of "bardis," of whom Spenser gives so curious an account. Speaking of the higher order of minstrels he says,*

* Vol. vi. small edition.

" their verses were taken up with general applause, and sung at all feasts and meetings, by certain other persons whose function that is, and who receive for the same great rewards and reputation among them."* In

* "The Scotch, Welsh, and Irish, though the countries they inhabit have been much subject both to foreign aggression and intestine wars, yet contain more of their aboriginal inhabitants, and are at this day a less mixed race than the English. They have still in some measure retained in popular use their peculiar dialects, handed down to them from remote ages. They converse in their own language with a conscious delight, and have preserved

a later period however, this *musique ambulante* seems to have declined in its influence, as did its professors in respectability; for we find one of them thus described by Sir William Temple: "A very gallant gentleman of the north of England," says he, "has told me of his own experience, that in his wolf-huntings there, when he used to be abroad in

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many of their ancient customs, institutions, traditions, and pastimes, and also many of their metrical compositions."

Preston on the Origin and Progress of the Fine Arts.

the mountains three or four days together, and lay very ill at nights, so that he could not sleep, they would bring him one of the tale-tellers; that when he lay down would begin a story of a king, or a giant, or a dwarf, or a damsel, or such rambling stuff, and continue it all night long, in such an even tone, that you heard it going on whenever you awakened."

Mr. Walker traces the origin of romantic fabling in Ireland to an Oriental source; not however through so remote a medium as the Milesian

settlers in this country, but through those catholic missionaries deputed occasionally from Rome to regulate the ritual, and who probably introduced among their supplies of holy legends; many profane romances, the wild offspring of visionary fancies and monastic indolence; and as the brilliant fictions of the East were the elements of which these romances were composed, "they thus," Mr. Walker asserts, "obtained a footing in Ireland, and furnished materials for the metrical tales of our early bards."

I have however met with some an-

cient Irish compositions which did not wear the character of Oriental poetry, and certainly rose far beyond the "rambling stuff" alluded to by Temple. I shall select a translation of one as an instance.

Scene, near Galway.

"Now sleeps the breeze of night on the moon-shattered wave, and the kindling azure of rosy morn invites my steps to the ocean's brim; its murmur soothes my care; a ship at a distance (stately as a swan on the rising surge) salutes my eye; the

swelling sail courts the passing air; quickly she reaches the pebbled shore; her lading precious holds the attentive sight a captive; the richest silks of Greece in folds loose floating rise, or sinking beam each various die that woofs the fluid bow; while precious stones that thirsty-seeming drink the light gleam brightly round. But soon my wandering soul is fixed on one fair object issuing from the bark, milder than day descending on the plain; behind her flows a snowy train of virgins, in movements gentle and in air divine; but she that train outshines as Hesper does his twink-

ling host, while her untainted mind beams through her form, diffusing smiles that soften every thought, and tune to sighs of love each passing gale; her wavy locks in parting radiance fall adown her lessening waist, while shining rings of happy gold embrace her snowy neck; the infant blushes of the dewy rose light kiss her cheek; her scarcely parting lip delays the milky dawn. Now various thoughts of contemplation rise—What can the errand of this angel mean? for nothing less I deemed the beauteous form of Peggy Deane. O fairest star of beauty's spread-

ing sky! O beauteous swan, that swelling on the sight dissolves in luxury the sinking soul! O beauteous nymph with teeth of polished snow! O sweetest branch of an illustrious race, whose deeds have often swelled the eternal song, and fed the poet's flame! O voice of Love, whose melting tones new accents to the listening harp impart! At thy dear presence the sun enfeebled grows, his beams soft sinking shew thy flowing hair that richer glows than his. Thrice happy man! oh, happiest he of men, who dares thy presence soft approach, hang on thy look, melt at thy touch,

or waste his soul for thee in sighs! O too enchanting look, that early spreads its soft persuasion o'er my heart, that dimm'd mine eyes, and won me first to verse; much fairer than Cassandra's form, than Helen of the winning mien, or Dian chaste, or Graina, soft-eyed maid,* or Deirdra mild, that with her lover Naoise fled to Alban's shore from Ulster's king, her spouse, whose beauty, hapless fate, and lawless flame, have often

* A celebrated Irish beauty and heroine in the reign of Elizabeth.

swelled the poet's reed! Yes, thou art fairer far than she; and yet thy glowing charms await unsung: in vain the lily offers for thy neck, the rose-bud for thy cheek, or blossoms for thy hair. Thy waist is gentler than the weasel's, and thy song's melody would chase the stroke of death; my heart incessant bleeds from wounds thine eyes have made! I feel my soul dissolve in sighs, and I am shrunk like flowers that mourn the absence of the sun. I'm like the solitary fowl on evening's purple wave; thy breath alone can warm me, for thy breath is sweeter than the breath

of morn. In vain I fly, still thou pursuest: in solitude I meet thy presence, and in a crowd I am alone: imagination loves to dwell upon thee; thy hair long and spreading is drawn from Love's own net; the rose and lily still dispute thy cheek; thy accent soft fades like the accent of the melting string; and thine eye's beam ---oh! happy he who flies that beam, yet hapless he !!!"

We had scarcely taken leave of our young story-teller, whose accidental rencontre has led me into this digres-

sion, when a sudden shower obliged us to seek shelter in a cabin near the shore; though little better than a mud-built hut, it was singularly clean, and we found its mistress (an elderly dame) busied in preparing dinner for her sons, who were at work. The feast consisted of some potatoes and milk, of which we were courteously solicited to partake. In the course of some little chit-chat, she took occasion to complain to Mr. **** of the oppression she suffered from her landlord; and having mentioned the exorbitant rent she paid for her cabin, added with a look and a manner I

shall never forget: "Surely it is too much to pay for *a shed to break one's heart under!*" So energetic, so expressive is the Irish language, that those of the lower order, who borrow the idiom of their English from that of their native tongue, frequently say more in a single sentence than volumes could express.* "Your absence is ever present to me;" "the light of heaven has taken shelter in

* "The Irish tongue is sharp and sententious," says Stainhurst, "and offereth great occasions to quick apothegms and proper allusions."

your eye;" "pulse of my beating heart;" and many other equally tender expressions of endearment, I have heard them frequently use to each other; and indeed, were Love to draw up a nomenclature of his own technical phrases, the Irish language would perhaps contribute more largely to the undertaking than any other whatever.

SKETCH XIV.

As novelty affords to the senses and the mind one of the liveliest gratifications of which either is susceptible, that system which still retains its gloss, that mode which still preserves its sanction, whether founded in truth or originating in error, still holds its patent from the passions of mankind, and is neither to be opposed with effect, nor resisted with

success, till the acumen of experience has detected its fallacy, or till it becomes uninteresting by becoming stale; while that which has for its best recommendation the charm of novelty only, must owe the sanction of universal adoption to the same variable and fluttering power to which it stood indebted for its first introduction. Whether the "new light" in farming so eagerly embraced in many parts of Ireland, owes its influence to its novelty or to its intrinsic excellence, it is for those to judge who can form their estimate from experienced proof. But how

far this country has been benefited morally, politically or physically, by the increased weight of it sirloins, the additional rotundity of its hogs, or the delicate ossific construction of its sheep, is a circumstance of which I candidly plead the most perfect ignorance.

But while the silver vase or golden medal shines at the board, or glitters at the breast of him who has enriched his country with the fattest bullock, or ennobled it with the largest hog, is there no prize for him whose heart, swelling indignant at the ob-

vious degradation of his humble compatriot brethren, exerts the best energies of his being to raise them in the scale of human nature and national interest? for him who indignantly beholding that

"Man's the only growth that withers here,"

boldly comes forward as the champion of those, from whose minds even habitual wretchedness has not obliterated the noblest traces of humanity; who endeavours to extend towards them the means of labour, and consequently of subsistence; who adequately rewards their exertions, and

voluntarily lends his individual efforts to that redress of long and existing grievance which can alone chase the scowl of latent insurrection from the close-knit brow of popular feeling, and awaken the cheery smile of heartfelt contentment in the downcast eye of habitual despondency.

I am told that many characters of high respectability, and some political influence in this country, undisturbed by national conflict, unambitious of relegislative power, devote all their faculties to the improvement of such implements of husbandry as

may eventually annihilate the necessity of all manual labour, and like the flying chaise of Bacon, or the magic cap of Fortunatus, execute the intention of their possessors without the troublesome intervention of human aid or animal assistance;*

* In a country swarming with population, chiefly devoted to pasturage, and inhabited by a bold, active, and restless peasantry, the good policy of torturing mechanical skill to devise new modes of lessening the necessity of human labour, is not very clear to minds who are apt to judge of causes by their effects, and to estimate an invention rather by its utility than its ingenuity.—"Le public ne prend jamais conseil

that others, distinguished by their elevated rank in society, meekly devote themselves to the *bienséance* of a piggery, and endeavour to regulate the "*petits morales*" of its occupants by the new light of agricultural philosophy;* and that many who unite

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que de son interêt, & ne proportionne point son estime pour les differens genres de l'esprit à l'inégale difficulté de ces genres, c'est-à-dire au nombre & à la finesse des idées necessaire; pour y reussir, mais seulement à l'avantage plus ou moins grand qu'il en retire."—*De l'Esprit, par Rapport au Public, c.* 12. *p.* 89.

* An Irish gentleman distinguished by his farming enthusiasm, invented a trough of pecu-

opulence to rank, emulate propensities and avocations of their own blacksmith, and on the splendid domains of their ancestors preside over the sale of newly-invented harrows and patent ploughs.*

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liar construction, to induce the pigs to eat with *propreté;* failing in the attempt, I heard him seriously declare that there was a radical principle of filth in the animal, which neither care nor education could vanquish.

* Attendant on these vast machines, and attached to the farms of these patrician farmers, a number of English hinds, imported to superintend the farms, are to be seen, who, well dressed, well fed, and well paid, insult by their

But while the regimen of cattle has become an object of fashionable attention, *who*, by an adequate reward of industry,

"Grants a bliss at labour's earnest call,"

and adds to the potatoe and salt of his peasant the luxury of one of the turnips sown for his sheep? While some degree of elegance is betrayed in the construction of a bullock-stall or a pig-stye, *who* raises the walls

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presence the natives of the soil, and by contrast and comparison teach them to feel their own degraded state with keener susceptibility.

or secures the roof of the miserable cabin, which, covered with a few turf sods, subjects its shivering inhabitants to all "the penalties of Adam, the seasons' changes?" While vehicles of comfort and of ease are provided to convey the pampered animal from the soil that nourishes it, to the market where it is to enrich its owner's purse, *who* feels for those whose wretched drapery defends not the form it scarcely covers from the weather's inclemency, for those whose torn and perished feet so often track the winter's snows with their naked pressure?

It is in vain to assert that by the population of Ireland exceeding the necessity of human labour, the wretchedness of the lower orders is become an inevitable evil; while immeasurable tracts of bog, whose reclaiming would afford subsistence to many hundred families, are suffered to lie undrained, to impure and corrupt the climate, and to injure and deform the aspect of the country;* while

* The promotion of public good must ever in some degree flow back in an inverse ratio on those whose individual exertions have tended to that promotion; and I was so forcibly struck

those numerous rivers in which the island abounds (sharing that general

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by the proprietors of bogs slumbering over the aggrandizement of their own properties, that I applied for a solution of the enigma to a gentleman of considerable landed property and agricultural experience; who replied, "that the preliminary step to render a bog productive was to drain it, which was best effected by subdividing it into roads; but that the inability of the small adjacent baronies to undertake so great a work was in general the chief obstacle. It was alone to be accomplished by becoming an object of general attention, by the unanimity and confederate efforts of a county at large to give presentments; in a word, the influence and exertion of public spirit, blended with the in-

neglect of all public concerns, interwoven with the intrinsic and internal interest of the country) are suffered to overflow their banks to a vast extent; whose timely confinement within their natural shoals would rescue many thousand acres of now unproductive land, from decided loss, and give employment to many thousand

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dividual principles of private interest." The Dublin Society, I understand, give premiums for crops off bogs, for the obtainment of which a few partial efforts by certain individuals are made; but if the premiums were offered for the draining of bogs, would or would not the effects be more general, and more extensively beneficial?

wretches, whom want of work and not want of principle drives to desperation.

Incapable from my sex, my years, my inexperience, to judge how far the natural, political, or commercial state of my native country admits of the introduction and establishment of manufactories; it is yet impossible I should cast my eyes on those vast bogs which spread their savage plains till the horizon limits their extent to the strained eye;* it

* The partial reclamation to be seen on the skirts of some bogs, testifies the latent capabili-

is impossible I should behold those numerous and noble rivers whose too

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ties of the whole. Speaking of a bog at Wordlawn, the seat of Lord Ashtown, and of the proprietor's mode of improving it, Mr. Young (in his Travels through Ireland) asserts that the bog in its original state was "like a bed of tow," unable to sustain the pressure of a horse's foot, from the lightness of its substance, and so wet that the drains could not be at first cut deeper than four feet; yet he adds, that he afterwards saw it in such perfect improvement, that its hay was fine, its herbage good, and it carried the complete appearance of a meadow, except in the drains, where the heath still appeared.

abundant waters cover * the most naturally luxurious soil, without a conviction striking my heart, that, in the remedy of those natural but

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* This perhaps would be most effectually obviated by the interference of the legislature, obliging the proprietors of the circumjacent lands to contribute to a work of such private and public utility, according to their respective tenures. The idea however is the suggestion of an inexperienced mind, guided by the enthusiasm of its wishes, in every thing that concerns the good of that country where its first ideas were awakened into existence, and cradled amidst circumstances of national interest.

injurious defects, lurk employment for the industrious, competency for the impoverished, riches for the individual, and beauty, health, and prosperity, for the country in general.

Oh! surely it requires no new light to discover that the happiness of a people constitutes the prosperity of a nation; that neither the improved beauty of her animals, nor the partial luxuriancy of her soil, can secure her internal felicity, or add lustre to her reputation, while circumstances of a peculiar but not in-

evitable nature repress the energy and limit the faculties of her children; while poverty sallows the check of her sons, and discontent sits louring on their brows; while the bold hand of religious distinction flings its ice upon the ardent feelings of national confederacy; and the baneful influence of party-spirit severs those hearts, whose unanimous coalition would form round the green shores of their native island, a barrier impregnable to the force of foreign invasion, invulnerable to the arts of foreign seduction. To him then whose every energy tends to the promotion of

that great object, be the prize of national honour adjudged; round his heart whose strongest feeling is his country's good, be that medal suspended which, warm from the mint of national gratitude, his country's hand presents. For such is the man to whom monarchs should decree their honours; such is the mam to whom nations should erect their statues.

SKETCH XV.

THE precipice of Alt-bo is a shrine to which all the votaries of the "terrible graces" of nature should bend their pilgrim steps.

———This is no little hill,
No sloping upland lifting to the sun.
Stone mountain this, desolate rock on rock;
The burthen of the earth.

From the window of my apartment at L* * * House, the extreme

point of Alt-bo incessantly caught my eye, and so frequently have I heard its wild and desolate features exalted above the other natural sublimities of the neighbourhood, that unable to wait upon the tardy departure of damp and gloomy weather, I prevailed on the indulgent associates of many of my little rambles to accompany me to this master-piece of magnificent but savage nature. The morning was chill, light showers fell at intervals, and as the road which leads to Alt-bo is so perilous and intricate as to be inaccessible to any vehicle, we were obliged to perform our little pilgrim-

age on horseback. As we proceeded, that bold ridge of mountain which towers above the narrow plains of Tyreragh, spread its undulating lines to the left, blue with the mists of morning, and dashing from its cloudy heights streams which the rain had swelled to torrents. To the right the mountains of Donegal appeared like vapours staining the horizon. The road narrow, devious, and sometimes almost impassable, frequently gave to our eyes the most wretched huts, whose half-naked inhabitants the sound of our horse's feet occasionally brought to their doors, giving a moral finish, not to a scene of cha-

racteristic wildness, but of comfortless desolation. The ocean at last abruptly broke upon our view, and presented the noblest though certainly the wildest coast I had ever beheld; the rock-scenery and windings of the coast equally defying the pencil or the pen to detail the features they daringly betrayed.

As we reached the shore, the tide was going out; yet as we crossed the sands beneath the umbrage of

"Rocks inaccessible,
And summits that tired the eagle's wing,"

the agitated ocean drove its moun-

tainous billows back, as if to threaten destruction on those who thus intruded on the boundaries of its awful and treacherous empire. Almost bathed by the spray of the tide, which opposing winds thus flung back, we took advantage of a defile worn through rocks by the incursion of the waves, with some difficulty ascended the precipitous heights, and at last gained the summit of those savage cliffs which a short time before we had strained our eyes to gaze at.

We now continued (and with great difficulty) to follow the narrow path

which was sometimes tracked along the edge of a precipice, sometimes wound through a desolated heath, and sometimes ran along the rocks which skirted the coast, until we at last reached the edge of a torrent which, flowing from the mountains that rose on our left, plunged into the ocean with a fathomless fall. Here, amidst the acclivities of the rocks, appeared a few fishing-huts, called in Irish "the village of the cliffs;" while among some boats drawn up from the shore, one of a better description was distinguished by the title of the admiral-boat, and belonged to the chief or leader of this little

piscatory colony. We obtained this intelligence from some young men, natives of the savage soil, and in their deportment free as the winds that visited it. It was Sunday, and they were amusing themselves on the rocks; their feet and heads were uncovered, though the wind blew keenly from the ocean, and the warm and almost impregnable covering we had provided ourselves with, was unable to resist the occasional attacks of the "pitiless storm."

They however seemed perfectly unconscious of its effects; and their apparent insensibility to the "jar of

elements," and their tall, robust, and hardy figures, were finely in point with the rude scenery around them; while their civilized address, and evident courtesy, evinced the little influence which mere situation can produce on manners. They entreated us to rest in their huts, offered to be our guides, and when we thankfully refused their attention, promised to take care of our horses, which now ceased to be of any use to us. The immediate path to Alt-bo, by which we now proceeded, was indeed barely passable to the human foot: sometimes the marshy soil sunk beneath

the pressure of our steps; sometimes high mounds of earth were to be surmounted, deep ditches got over, and not unfrequently the savage and irregular cliffs, darting abruptly into the ocean, rendered the head giddy while the timid and uncertain foot pursued the track marked along their towering summits. It was from the extreme points, and angular direction, of these cliffs, that we sometimes obtained a view of those immense grottoes, and yawning caverns, which vaulted their lofty heads, hung with sea-weed, and embossed with shells and maritime shrubs; and where the pent up

winds and incursive waves occasioned such an incessant war of elements, that fancy, resting her wandering eye upon the terrific excavations, might well consider them as the palladium of the spirit of the storms. Some scattered pieces of wreck floated near ; * and at the entrance of one was anchored a fishing-boat, which marked the adventurous spirit of him that dared to guide it to so perilous a mooring.

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* The coast is reckoned fatal by mariners, and many vessels are frequently lost on it during the winter season.

Above the most awful of these caves, and high over all its savage competitors, towers the cliff which bears the name of Alt-bo. With hesitating steps and dazzled eyes we approached its highest point. The ocean roaring at its shelvy base, which indeed seemed "fixed in the world's foundation," spread before the eye in all the grandeur of infinitude; while the mountain-scenery of Tyreragh rose in full relief to the left, and to the right swelled the savage summits of the Rosses, which skirted the opposite shores of Donegal, and the island of Innis-murry

lifted its green head midway amidst the surrounding waves. At some distance from Alt-bo, the abyss of Coradun presents an object never to be viewed without an emotion of terror; and if the source of the true sublime consists in that which excites ideas of pain and danger, and operates on the mind in a manner analogous to terror, the sublimest object I have ever beheld is the abyss of Coradun. High and bold as the precipice of Alt-bo, its black and rocky sides seemed to have been wrenched asunder by some great convulsion of nature; while the noise

of the ocean rushing through the mighty chasm, though its "earth-shaking roar comes deadened up," falls on the ear like subterraneous thunder. Even the shrill scream of the numerous flocks of sea-fowl (which from its summit appear like flies swarming at its base), is but faintly caught at intervals, when, urging their rapid wings, they reach its altitude half way, and spent and exhausted by the soaring effort, sink on the waves beneath.

If any sounds can be said to be sublime, those which reached my

ear as I tremblingly hung over the abyss of Coradun, may surely arrogate the character; for though the sentiment of sublimity belongs more properly to the affections of the mind than to mere organic sensation, yet who has not felt that there is in sound "some sympathy with souls," and that the one may be "not touched but rapt, not wakened but inspired," by the influence of the other? Oh! never can that effect be obliterated from my recollection, which was produced on my fancy and my feelings, by the deep roar of waters in the narrow confines of Coradun,

and by the wildly magnificent scenery amidst whose savage grandeur I heard it: often will the memory of that moment return, when my mind, all its motions suspended between admiration and horror, became the victim of imagination; and overwhelmed by a sense of my fancied danger, I rushed precipitately from the awful brow of Coradun, with such a feeling of vague and doubtful pleasure, as the consciousness of sudden preservation on the very verge of destruction brings with it, the lingering emotions of recent terror tempering the joy of immediate delivery.

It is amidst such scenes as Coradun and Alt-bo present, where

" No vernal blooms the torpid rock array,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest,"

that descriptive genius might select her grandest images of sublimity. In such a scene the soaring genius of a Shakspeare, a Salvator, or an Ossian, might repose his soaring wing, and find his wildest visions realized.

Our return from the shrine of our interesting pilgrimage was marked by as many " hair-breadth scapes," and " moving accidents," as crossing

the wildest heaths and most desolate rocks, amidst the sombre gloom of a dark stormy autumnal evening, could bring with it. While the roar of Coradun was still murmuring on our ears, we lost our path; but fortunately met a poor peasant returning to his hut in the neighbouring mountains, and who, instead of answering our questions, insisted on turning back with us, and was indeed our voluntary guide for near two miles, which he had of course to traverse over again on his way home.

Before we caught a view of the

cliffs, the shadows of evening were thickening into night; and notwithstanding the drizzling of the rain, and keen sea-breeze that chilled the air, we found the courteous "sons of the wave" to whom we had intrusted our horses, watching with solicitude and impatience for our return.

SKETCH XVI.

WHATEVER hardships the Irish peasant submits to during the week, it can never be said that "*Sunday shines no sabbath-day to him.*" Apparently endowed with the singular faculty of being periodically happy, the hallowed day brings with it to him, a temporary oblivion of every care, and the transient possession of every enjoyment, which his fancy

(little schooled in pleasurable speculation) can devise. Early on a Sunday morning a cabin, cleaner than usual, exhibits at its door a groupe very different in appearance from that it sheltered the preceding day. The lower Irish, passionately fond of dress, and without the means of gratifying their dominant passion, confine their wishes to the hard-earned suit which the mass-house, or dance on Sunday, or the fair of their market-town, affords an opportunity of displaying. Thus the scanty drapery of wretchedness is exchanged, not only for the garb of comfort, but

of ostentation; and it is not unusual to behold even ornamental finery on those on Sunday, who during the rest of the week were worse clothed than the poorest mendicant in England. It is remarked by Buffon, that "a man's character passes in some degree into his dress; and that we are led to suppose what kind a man he is, by the kind of dress he wears." This is in some degree illustrated by the weekly metamorphosis of the Irish peasant; for he seems to throw off, with his wretched "customary suit," the gloom of countenance which accompanied it, and

the national cheeriness of his character then shines in every lineament of his face.

On a Sunday the young women go in groupes to the mass-house, generally dressed in white gowns and coloured petticoats; with their rug cloaks hanging on one arm, and their shoes and stockings on the other. When they approach the chapel they bathe their feet in the first stream, and assume those articles of luxury which are never drawn on but for shew, and the public gaze of the parish. After prayers both sexes

(and of all ages) generally adjourn to the fields, to witness a hurling *

* A barony, and even sometimes a county, will *hurl* against another. The respective parties are drawn up like two little armies, and distinguished from each other by their colours. Their goals are generally placed about 200 yards distant: they are guarded by two sentinels called in Irish *coolhbara*, while the active parties are termed *tridagh*, which I believe means on the alert. "The might that slumbers in a peasant's arm" is by them roused to an incredible exertion; and the address, spirit, and dexterity, displayed during the game, are truly wonderful. Wrestling-matches are also extremely frequent, and generally performed with singular skill and adroitness.

match, or some of those manly sports to which the lower Irish are so passionately addicted. One of them, the *cathu-clogh*, or "flinging of the stone," is precisely the same with the ancient Greek pastime of the *discus*. The candidate who pants for the fame of those

"Virtues that are placed in nerve and bone,"

takes a stone of immense weight in his right hand, inclines his body a little forward, advances one leg, poises his arm, and after two or three balancing motions, flings it from him

to a considerable distance. These national amusements are not confined to the peasantry, the young gentlemen of the adjoining counties frequently engage in them. As in the gymnastic festivals of ancient Greece, men of the highest rank, and most refined education, appeared as candidates for the prize of personal strength or personal activity. Thus even the amusements among the lower Irish are calculated to strengthen their frames, and to inure them in supporting the greatest burthens and the greatest fatigue. While the English peasant employs the hour suc-

ceeding to his attendance at church, in the perusal of some religious tract, the Irish peasant devotes himself to an exercise which may render him a less pious, but certainly forms him to be a more serviceable member of the community.

Although the fare of Sunday seldom rises beyond the accustomed potatoes and milk of the rest of the week; some few halfpence are always spared from the household purse to purchase the pleasures which the Sunday cake bestows. In the centre of a field near some *petit auberge*, a

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distaff is fixed in the earth, on which is placed a large flat cake: this cake is the signal of pleasure, and becomes the reward of talent. The young and old of both sexes, for miles round the neighbourhood, hasten to enjoy the pleasures of the cake, which is sometimes carried off by the best dancer, and sometimes by the archest wag of the company. At a little distance from this standard of revelry, is placed its chief agent the piper, who is always seated on the ground with a hole dug near him, into which the contributions of the assembly are dropt: the man-

ner of bestowing these donations is attended with a little gallantry not to be passed over in silence. At the end of every jig, the piper is paid by the young man who dances it, and who endeavours to enhance the value of the gift, by first bestowing it on his fair partner, and though a penny a jig is esteemed very good pay, yet the gallantry or ostentation of the contributer, anxious at once to appear generous in the eyes of his mistress, or to outstep the liberality of his rivals, sometimes trebles the sum which the piper usually receives. I have been at some of these cakes, and have invariably observed the inordinate

passion for dancing, so prevalent among the Irish peasants. It is indeed very rare to find an individual among them who has not for some time under the tuition of a dancing master *. Thus passes away the Sab-

* It is however necessary to observe that the profession of this elegant art, by no means prohibits the adoption of any other: a friend of mine having sent for a carman a few days back to convey some furniture to a neighbouring town, he excused himself, saying that "he was a dancing-master by trade, as well as a carman, and that his pupils were so numerous just then, he could not possibly absent himself from them.

bath of an Irish peasant, the first first hours of the day are devoted to religion, the rest to the enjoyment of such pleasures as lie within the limited scope of his acquisition. Sometimes led by the light of nature, sometimes restrained by the shades of prejudice, alternately governed by truth and error, his conduct is only to be judged by the circumstances under which he is reared. The rigid principles of Calvinistical faith, the strict observances of Lutheran piety, may condemn his festal mode of passing that day peculiarly devoted to the Being who made it

the sacred season of his own repose; but whether the happy overflowings of a cheerful humble heart, blest and blessing in the short sweet season of its transient felicity, or the sombre meditation of systematic piety, periodically indulged, according to the letter of the law, is the incense that "smells sweetest to heaven," it is for him alone to judge "to whom all hearts are known."

SKETCH XVII.

To those who are Epicureans in weather, whose pleasures are in some degree subject to "every skiey influence," the refreshing sweetness of the air after a transient shower is the first of atmospherical enjoyments; and in the confidence of a promise offered to us by a brilliant rainbow, we set out on one of the pleasantest rambles we had hitherto enjoyed. Directing our steps to the foot of the

ox-mountains, we crossed a dismantled arch rudely thrown over a stream which flowed from their summit, and whose source became the object of our pursuit. As we descended the mountain's brow, a little valley gradually opened between its steep acclivities, which still ascending with the elevation of the mountains, was still embosomed by its irregular and overhanging projections, while the streams which serpentined through it, seemed to expand as we proceeded along its banks, sometimes dashing wildly over those pieces of rock it had torn away in its steep descent,

sometimes stealing its thin pellucid wave over broad flags of marble which shone brightly to the transient sun-beam, and sometimes falling unimpeded from a lofty and perpendicular steep, while from the white foam beneath arose a feathery spray which dropt in dewy showers on the aquatic plants with which its shores were enriched. We frequently paused in the course of our ramble from the weariness of the continued ascent; but more frequently to contemplate such scenes as included within a coup-d'œil, much of the beautiful and sublime of picturesque creation.

The boundless ocean, the Alpine rock, the dreary heath, the luxurious vale, and many landscape traits incongruous to each other, seemed here happily united in one harmonious combination; while many a ruin which time had "mouldered into beauty," many a hut which necessity had hung upon the virid point of some tall cliff, charmed the fairy gaze of fancy, and awakened in the musing mind a train of associated ideas which shed an extraneous interest over every object on which the eye reposed. While I beheld these beautiful scenes, so numerous in my

native country, so frequently concealed in those remote places which national observation has never visited, and to which foreign curiosity has never been pointed; imagination eagerly glided over those times of anarchy and warfare, when the waste and desolated land smoked with the vital stream of her sons, to that felicitous period, when the candid Bede describes it as another Canaan, flowing with milk and honey; and when even Cambreus, borne away by the beauty and fertility of its aspect, describes it as a country whose verdant hills were covered with in-

numerable flocks, whose plains waved with golden corn, and whose ancient forests were filled with wild beasts. Such it was when the Cambrian topographer landed on its green and smiling shores among the first of its British invaders *.

* Even Morryson, the most prejudiced and abject of the many scribblers, who in the Elizabethian day, endeavoured to write themselves into the favour of the English government by calumniating the natural as well as the moral state of Ireland, even while he upbraids the natives for their negligence of agriculture, is inadvertently led into a description of the

Notwithstanding the rough acclivities of which these mountains are composed, we found them cultivated to their summits, in detached places; and as we were climbing up an almost inaccessible steep, we overtook a poor peasant who was literally not driving but pushing a poor lean horse up before him, laden with panniers filled with manure, with which he was going to enrich a future po-

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beauty and fertility of a part of the country, and involuntarily extols the disposition of the Irish to tillage and their large exportations of corn.

tatoe ridge, obtained for a low rent on the summit of the mountain; thus, by unexampled industry and unwearied labour, endeavouring to

"Force a churlish soil for scanty bread."

Before we lost sight of him, he had actually taken one of the panniers off the wretched animal's back, and was carrying it on his own.*

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* A cultivation so constantly formed on the summits of the highest mountains in Ireland, proves that native taste for agriculture, which to the modern Irish has been so unjustly de-

While necessitous industry, without the cheering stimulus of a com-

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nied, and of which the ancient left such irrefragable proofs. Mr. Mollineux in his letter to the archbishop of Dublin, supposes Ireland to have been more populous in former times, merely from the remains which it still exhibits of agriculture: "mountains (says he) that are now covered with bogs, have been formerly ploughed, for when dug five or six feet high a proper soil for vegetation is discovered, and an appearance of furrows and ridges is still visible: he adds, that a plough and a hedge-row were found under a bog six feet deep in the county of Donegal, and that he had himself seen the stump of a large tree in a bog ten feet deep at

petent reward, thus toils laboriously up the "heights precipitous," and

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Castle Forbes. It is well known that in the wildest and most uncultivated parts of the county of Cork, the vestiges of high roads cut through the mountains are still visible, and that while modern Ireland is reproached for the scantiness of her plantations, her luxurious woods in former times supplied England with the timber of which many of the noblest of her religious edifices are constructed: the churches of Gloucester, Westminster, and several others, are covered *with Irish oak*. All that remained of the Irish woods were cut down during the reigns of William and Anne, and sent to Holland for the purpose of ship-building, Irish oak

steals a scanty subsistence from that rugged soil least favoured by the genial eye of nature, indolence, as a national defect, cannot be attributed to the Irish character.* Perhaps in-

being even then deemed the best in Europe. I believe it was some time antecedent to that period, that the famous wood of *shilelah* in the county of Wicklow lost its growth of timber. "Countries" (says Montesquieu) "are not cultivated in proportion to their fertility, but to their liberty; and the vestiges of ancient agriculture which are still discoverable in Ireland, give no faint proof of the civil liberty she enjoyed."

* I have been repeatedly assured by persons of undoubted veracity, that it is usual to let the

deed the same cheeriness of exertion is not to be found in the Irish labourer as animates the efforts of the English husbandman. But surely the eagerness with which the English farmer seizes on the poor peasant emigrant of Ireland, is a correlative proof of that superiority of

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least fertile parts of the mountains to the peasantry, at a low rent; from whom (after they have by the greatest labour improved their soil) it is reclaimed, and relet at a higher rent to some more wealthy tenant: mean time the original cultivator takes another barren tract, and continues to use the same exertions to the same effect.

manual strength *, that wondrous capability of exertion, and that ready inclination for employment, which characterize the poor adventurer, whose merit in this instance is seldom justly estimated in his own country, and never adequately rewarded. "Nature is just to all mankind, and repays them for their industry: she renders them industrious by annexing rewards in proportion to their labour; but if an arbitrary

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* "Both the body and mind of the Irish (says Davis) "are indued with extraordinary abilities of nature."

prince should attempt to deprive people of nature's bounty, they would fall into a disrelish of industry, and then indolence and inaction must be their only happiness:" and by whatever means the bounteous intentions of nature are counteracted, the efforts must be the same.

The character of a nation, so far as it is uninfluenced by climate, must in a great degree be the result of the policy by which it is governed.—"La science de la morale (says Helvetius) n'est autre chose que la science même de legislation."—Ad-

mitting, therefore, that the indolence of the Irish has become a national vice, it certainly cannot be traced to a national source; the liberal minister of Elizabeth, reluctantly acceding to the fact, endeavours, and with success, to trace it to the extortion of *coin and livery*, an extortion under which the Irish smarted for centuries, "and which" (says Davis) "produced *two notorious effects*, for it made the lands waste, and the people idle; for when the husbandman had laboured all the year, the soldier consumed in one night all the fruits of that labour."

Among a people who for more than four centuries suffered the most galling hardships that warfare and civil dissension could inflict, who (as an English minister expresses it) "were beaten as in a mortar by pestilence and famine," many bad habits must have insinuated themselves, which time, good policy, and undeniable causes of popular contentment, could alone undermine or destroy;* and

* "Qu'ont produit, jusqu'aujourdhui les plus belles maximes de morales? Elles ont corrigé quelques particuliers des défauts que peut-être ils se reprochaient d'ailleurs: elles

indeed a knowledge of Irish history is sufficient to convince the most

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n'ont produit aucun changement dans les mœurs des nations. Quelle en est la cause ? C'est que les vices d'un peuple sont, si j'ose le dire, toujours cachés au fond de sa legislation ; c'est là qu'il faut fouiller, pour arracher la racine productrice de ses vices." Helvetius.—" What has ever been accomplished by all the fine maxims of morality ? They may have corrected some faults, of which individuals were conscious in their conduct; but they have produced no amendment in the characters of nations. And the cause of this is, that the vices of a people are always rooted in its legislative code, where we must search in order to eradicate them."

prejudiced mind, that most of the vices which have been attributed to the character of the lower Irish, are to be traced to an early political cause. Thus the same injustice that operated as a check on the ardour of Irish industry, broke the tie of national love, and drove the suffering native of Ireland a mendicant into foreign lands*, awakened in those who preferred a struggling penury at

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* "So (says Sir J. Davis) that the lower Irish chose to be beggars in foreign countries rather than labour in their own fruitful land at home." "And a brave people (asserts Burke)

home, to confident indigence abroad, that vigilant quickness of apprehension, which prejudiced aversion construed into craft.

As we had now reached the spring of the mountain-torrent, whose devious course had already seduced us far beyond the general limits of our rambles, we began to descend by a winding path, which led to a little

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" will prefer liberty accompanied by virtuous poverty, to a depraved and wealthy servitude." *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

village on the skirts of the mountain's brow. The intelligence of our approach had preceded our arrival by some minutes, and two of the villagers who had been in dispute about a stream of water, which the one had diverted from supplying the mill of the other, came to submit their dispute to Mr. ***, and to abide by his arbitration. A people who are always thus ready to apply to magisterial influence, cannot so much be supposed a litigious people, as to act from a sense of equity that renders them ever alive to the least appearance of imposition.

An Irish peasant who thinks himself aggrieved or injured, will go any distance, and encounter every obstacle, to obtain retribution, or, as he expresses it, to get law; but whatever may be the destiny of his suit, or whatever verdict the magistrate pronounces, even though destructive to his hopes, and inimical to his interest, if he can at all reconcile it to his understanding, he submits without a murmur.*

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* Being on a visit a few weeks back at the house of a leading magistrate, and rising earlier one morning than usual, I beheld from my

Fierce in their native hardihood of soul,
True to imagined right, above controul,
While thus the peasant boasts his right to scan,
He learns to venerate himself as man.

The Irish have probably borrowed this keen sense of justice and pro-

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window two groupes of peasants leaning at a little distance from each other; and though it was excessively cold and rained heavily, they remained in this exposed and comfortless situation from seven till ten. When my host descended from his bed-room and gave audience to his shivering clients, who had come for law, the question to be decided was of a very equivocal nature, and I imagine it required all the

found submission to judicial authority, from the rigid severity of their ancient Brehon laws. When Sir E. Pelham and Sir J. Davis went as the first justices of assize into the counties of Tyrconnel and Tyrone, they observed, that though their commission was somewhat distasteful to the Irish lords, "yet that it was most

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subtility of the law to ascertain to an exactitude which was the party aggrieved; an immediate judgment was however pronounced, and the litigants departed amicably together, equally submissive to the decree of magisterial umpire, though certainly not with equal cause for satisfaction.

sweet and welcome to the common people: for they quickly apprehended the difference between the tyranny and oppression under which they lived before, and the first government and protection which was promised them in time to come:" and surely this amenability to magisterial influence, this subordination to the voice of superior rank and official power, argue little of that lawless and intractable disposition so generally ascribed to the character of the Irish peasantry.

They indeed not only entertain a

strong and almost intuitive idea of jurisprudence, but are warmly attached to the formulæ of such little laws as their sense of right and wrong, and wish of mutual preservation, have induced them to establish among themselves.*

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* To borrow salt and not to repay it, even to the last grain, is deemed a fatal infringement of this social code; and I understand that even the first organization of the Thrashers was marked by the promulgation of certain sumptuary laws, by which they endeavoured to restrain the licentious innovations admitted into the costume of their compatriots, by the influence of rustic vanity, or the contagion of

superior example. One of their manifestoes fixed on the door of a chapel, interdicted the use of shoes in favour of *brogues*, except to such as did not speak Irish, they being considered equally unworthy the national character and national dress. The Irish *kirchiff* and *binogue* were also to be worn, on the penalty of having any more modern covering taken from the wearer.

SKETCH XVIII.

My rambles and frequent conversations with the peasantry in the neighbourhood of L*** house, have obtained me a degree of rustic notoriety, to which I stand indebted for a visit from Mr. Thady O'Conolan, a schoolmaster in the neighbourhood, and a personage not only highly esteemed by his rural disciples, but looked up to by his less intelligent neighbours, as a prodigy of learning, erudition, and

genius. He introduced himself, by saying: "he had heard I was fond of Irish composition, and that he had waited on me to mention he had some of the poems of Ossian, which were much at my service. The Irish" (he added with a brogue that beggars all conception), "the Irish is the finest and loftiest tongue in the world: the English can never come near it, and the Greek alone is worthy of being compared to it." He then with great enthusiasm repeated the description of Fion's shield in Irish, and Homer's description of that of Achilles, giving (with

great exultation) the preference to the former; as he did to Ossian's account of his father's hounds, over the dogs of Ovid: and then with the utmost gravity declared his intention of translating the Eneid, and some of Terence's plays, into Irish. "The latter (he continued) I will teach to my scholars, who may play it yet upon one of the great London stages to admiration."

When I complimented him on the extent of his erudition, and expressed my astonishment at his having acquired it in so remote a situation, he

replied: "Young lady, I went far and near for it, as many a poor scholar did before me: for I could construe Homer before I ever put on shoe or stocking, aye, or a hat either, which to be sure I never did till I was twenty years of age." He then at my request gave me a sketch of his peripatetic studies. When he was a young man (he said) there were but few schools in Connaught, and those few but bad: and that it was not unusual for eight or ten boys "*who had the love of learning strong upon them,*" to set off bare-footed and bare-headed to Munster, where

the best schools were then held; that they commenced their philosophic pilgrimage poor and friendless; but that they begged their way, and that the name of *poor scholar* procured them every where friends and subsistence; that having heard much of the celebrity of a school-master in the county of Clare, he and his adventurous companions directed their steps towards his seminary; "but (added Thady) "it being a grazing country, and of course no hospitality to be found there (meaning that it was thinly inhabited), we could not get a spot to shelter our heads in the

sage, is a miserable cabin on the side of a very desolate wood. The sound of our horses' feet brought a number of his young disciples to the door, clad in a drapery light and frugal as Philosophy herself could dictate; for neither the Greek sandal, the Roman perones, nor the Irish brogue, secured their naked feet from the damp earthen flood of the academy. The next moment Thady himself appeared in all the majesty of pedagogue power: his hair, dress, and manner, were all admirable, and left the Lingo and O'Sullivan of O'Keefe far behind; his low clumsy figure, clerical tonsure, rubicund face; his

wrapping coat, according to the old Irish costume, fastened with a skewer, the sleeves unoccupied, and the collar of his shirt thrown open; combined with his Greek and Latin quotations, his rich brogue, and affected dignity, to render him a finished character. Having reprimanded his pupils for their want of good manners, he welcomed us with a look and air that seemed to convince us, as well as them, that their dereliction from decorum proceeded not from any deficiency of precept or example on the part of their master. He then apologized for the absence of his first

class, who, he said, he intended should have construed some of Homer for us; but that they had gone to cut turf for a poor distressed family in the neighbourhood, and that for that day the Trojan plains were resigned for the bog. "It was but the other day (said he) they built up that cabin yonder, for a poor old widow, and I gave them a holiday for it and my blessing into the bargain."

The interior of Thady's cabin perfectly corresponded with its external aspect. It was divided into two

apartments, which boasted no other furniture than an old deal table covered with copy-books and slates, and a few boards placed on stones which served as seats to the young students, some of whom were poring over the "*Seven wise Masters of Greece:*" others, vainly held a Cordery, while their eyes were fixed on the visitors; and three tall fellows were endeavouring to read all at the same time out of an old tattered volume of Virgil. "There (said Thady pointing to the inward room), there is my *sanctum sanctorum:* there I teach Homer, philosophy, and the

mathematics:" and taking down an old book (which had sympathized in the destiny of Virgil) he exclaimed: "This is the only Homer I have; and though seven boys read out of it daily, it never causes a moment's dispute: whereas, if I had two young gentlemen studying in it, my Homer would be a bone of contention to them from morning till night." Indeed Thady endeavoured continually to impress us with an idea of the subordination and civilized manners of his scholars, and we saw nothing that in the least degree contradicted his assertions; he assured us that the labourer who

earned but sixpence a day, would sooner live upon potatoes and salt, than refuse a little learning to his child. "I have," said he, "above twenty boys who are come from distant parts to me, who begged their way, and who are now maintained among the poor of the neighbourhood, who, far from considering them a burthen, were so eager to have them, that to avoid jealousy, I was obliged to have lots drawn for them; the boys indeed are grateful, and make the best returns they can by working early and late for their patrons when not engaged with me." Having pro-

cured a holiday for his pupils, we now took leave of Thady; and if to be a school-master, it is "requisite to be more or less than man," as Le Sage declares, Thady certainly conceived himself the former, as he detailed the merits of his seminary, and the classic progress of his disciples.

The passionate love of letters discovered by the native Irish in all ages, it would indeed be obstinate scepticism to deny; since even the host of enemies which Ireland has had to contend with, never dare

deny her supremacy in learning; and how so ardent a love for all that softens and humanizes the natural state of man can be reconciled with a ferocious and savage barbarity of national character, is a paradox not easily comprehended. Sir John Davis, who was attorney-general in Ireland, when a series of civil wars had reduced it to an almost barbarous state (compared to that in which it was found by the English barons in the reign of Henry the Second), declares, "that the Irish were even then (amidst an unceasing anxiety for their lives and property, which

were always threatened and never secure) still lovers of music, poetry, and all kind of learning;" and indeed no stronger testimony * of their ancient civilization could be produced than that which still exists in

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* Allemande (in his Histoire d'Irlande) asserts that it was enough to be an Irishman, or even to have studied in Ireland, to become the founder of a religious seminary in any part of Europe. "When Gothic ignorance expelled all learning and science from the continent," (says an elegant writer) they fell into the protection of the Hynialls until a war with strangers altered the face of things in Ireland."

the love of learning discoverable among the most neglected and despised of their posterity. Doctor Johnson, in lamenting that doctor Leland began his History from too late a date, adds: "the ages which deserve a strict inquiry, are those times (for such there have been) when Ireland was the school of the West" Learning in Ireland has indeed had much to encounter both from foreign and domestic enemies. The first blow it received was during the first Danish invasion, when the savage Turgicus with a political barbarity burnt all the books he could disco-

ver, and razed the colleges to the ground; while the bard, resigning his charming art with that liberty which had been his inspiration and his theme, fled from the usurped castle of his patron, or escaped from the ruins of the hallowed sanctuary of his order, and with his harp unstrung and his voice broken and tremulous, sought a refuge in the labyrinth of the cavern or the gloom of the wood, refusing like the enslaved Israelite to breathe on the ear of his country's foe a "melody in his heaviness." Yet how few are there now to be found, who, like the bard of Erin

or of Israel, exclaim: "when I forget thee, my country, may my right hand forget her cunning!"

On our return from Thady's, a tall well-looking young man with a satchel on his back, ran for a considerable way beside the carriage, until perceiving that we observed him, he said he had taken the liberty to follow us, to beg we would give him an old Cicero; as we had distributed several old books among Thady's pupils, not one of which had fallen to his lot. We asked him what profession he was intended for: he said

he had been studying for Apothecaries' Hall, but that of late he had taken to philosophy. The philosopher was barefooted, and though it was raining, ran beside the carriage with an uncovered head.

SKETCH XIX.

THE incessant rain of a morning, sultry for the advanced season, was the precursor of one of the finest evenings I ever beheld. The clouds discharged of their heaviness rose in fleecy columns from the sides of the surrounding mountains. The setting sun unobscured by a single vapour, with all his blushing honours thick about him, sunk in the waves of the "steep Atlantic;" and the large ling-

ering drops of the recent showers hung like brilliant gems on the foliage of the trees, whose leaves were embued with the mellow colouring of autumn's last tints. The air, calm and still, breathed odours; and a shot fired from an American vessel as it cleared the bar, was the only sound that disturbed the soft solemnity of the hour. Such was the evening in which my last ramble amidst the romantic wilds of Tyreragh was taken.

I had not wandered far from L*** house, when I was overtaken by a young peasant who was driving a

mule laden with two panniers. As soon as he had approached us, I received the usual benediction and salute; and the voluntary information that he was going to Sligo, for some grains for a sick cow, not being able (he said) to procure any at Ballina, whence he had just come, as Ballina and its neighbourhood had been the head-quarters of the Thrashers. I made some inquiries relative to their operations. "Why (replied he), they are busy enough at present with the tythe-proctors; and they have barred a priest out of his chapel, in the hope of making him lower his

dues, threatening to go to church if he does not, not being able to pay both priest and minister, since the proctors have raised the tythes and the priest his dues. For my own part, church or mass is all one to me." After some further conversation, my eleemosynary companion passed on.

The apparent indifference of this young peasant (who was probably the oracle of his countrymen) to any peculiar form of worship, confirmed me in an opinion, which from reiterated experience I had long en-

tertained; that the peasantry of Ireland were not naturally so bigoted a people as was generally supposed; and that they were rather coalesced in opinion and sentiment, and attached to particular forms, as belonging to a certain class in political establishment, than jealously united as the professors of any particular sect in religion.

Does the unfortunate whom necessity leads, or the traveller whom mischance conducts, to their huts, find his religion a subject of inquiry before he receives the rites of hospi-

tality, so cordially, so indiscriminately bestowed? Does the protestant gentleman find himself less faithfully, less actively served than the catholic, or does a difference of faith influence the social affections of their hearts, or chill the ardour of their attachment to those who treat them with justice and humanity? Oh! no; the line of demarcation which severs the lower from the higher orders of the Irish nation has not been traced by the finger of bigotry: it is drawn by poverty and discontent; it is to be defaced by benevolence and good policy.

However principles of patriotism may be influenced by a romantic ardour of imagination; however the *amor patriæ* of youthful feelings may revel in the speculation of a native Utopia; however the enthusiasm of national affection may ideally overleap the rational boundary of reason and possibility; it is not easy to believe that even the most visionary mind, animated by the most patriotic sentiments, would be so chimerical in its hopes, or so wild in its desires, as to anticipate or suppose the revival of those original rights forfeited by the influence of the

(now far distant) events to which all nations are subject, and lost in the sweep of ages gone by " with those beyond the Flood ;" or speculate on the annihilation of those existing establishments, sanctioned by time, by succession, by all that guards the privileges and claims of society, and all that secures the property and possessions of the individual. But though I would not assert, and do not believe, that " the succession of those who cultivate the soil is the true pedigree of property ;" yet while in those who do cultivate it I behold the rude traces of the happiest

nature, struggling against the hardships of the severest destiny; while local oppression and hopeless indigence impel them to desperate revolt, or lure them to daring innovation; it is surely to be wished that those causes, which through a series of ages have produced such fatal, such invariable effects, were at least softened, if not effectually eradicated.*

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* "If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right: it is an institution of beneficence; and law itself is but beneficence

It is indeed asserted by some Irishmen, that there is no excuse for the errors of their unhappy countrymen, because there is no cause for that murmuring spirit of discontent so

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acting by rule. Men have a right to live by that rule: they have a right to justice as between their fellows, whether their fellows are in politic functions, or in ordinary occupation; they have a right to the fruits of their industry, and to the means of making their industry fruitful; they have a right to the acquisition of their parents, to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring, to instruction in life, and to consolation in death."—Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France.

long apparent in their conduct; and though this doctrine of effect without causes may be supported by some logicians, who assert that their actual separation implies neither absurdity nor contradiction, yet to one whose heart has long sorrowed over national affliction, and whose head is little skilled in logical subtilities, it implies both.

The light of truth guides us by the simplest path to the source of national misery or national vice; it is with her we trace them to natural or to moral causes, to the fatality of

climate or to the errors of legislation. It is by her pure beam we discover whether the distractions in which nations are so frequently involved, are the physical results of feverish constitutions and maniac brains; or the moral effects of that impulsive principle in human nature, which sooner or later inevitably opposes itself to the infringements of those rights which hold their sacred charter from the voice of nature's God.

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